


37 Ways to Use

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Use these suggestions to increase your youth group's effectiveness . . . and have fun doing it

Do you view the telephone as a "necessary evil"? Do you use it only when you have to? At times do you wish you could tear it off the wall?

We probably all feel that way at one time or another. But the telephone can be a wonderful asset to youth ministry—from teaching kids how to relate to one another to using it in never-thought-of-before ways.

Here are 37 tips for using the telephone to increase your youth ministry's effectiveness.



TIME-SAVING TIPS

- Concentrate on your calls. Turn off the television and radio. Don't talk to others nearby while on the phone.
- Plan your calls. Write notes of what you want to say before you call. This helps avoid lengthy conversations.
- When you call someone, ask, "Do you have a minute?" before continuing to talk.
- Be courteous, but to the point. Save time by getting right to the reason for your call.
- Set a time limit to calls. Say, "I only have five minutes to talk. Maybe we can talk longer another time."
- Stand up to talk. This helps keep your mind on the call and end it sooner.
- Make definite closure to calls. Don't say, "I guess I should go now"; but rather say, "I really have to go now. Goodbye."
- Use phone answering machines or recorders as a way of screening calls. Don't forget to return your calls.
- If you have constant repeat or late-night callers, but don't want to talk then, say, "Can I call you back tomorrow when I can talk longer?"
- If people call at meal times, ask if you can call them back later. (Listing appropriate times to call you in your youth newsletter helps avoid this problem.)
- Avoid counseling over the phone. If there appears to be a problem, tell the person you'd rather talk to him or her in person.



CONTACTING KIDS

- Call kids to remind them about upcoming activities.
- When you read in the newspaper about something neat the kids have done, call them and praise them.
- Call kids to thank them for helping you on a project.
- Call kids just to say hello and check how they're doing. (This is especially important if you don't have time to make personal visits.)

the Telephone



GROUP-BUILDING IDEAS

■ Organize a telephone prayer chain. Select two or three kids you can call who'll pray with group members about specific prayer requests during the month.

■ Organize a phone-calling committee. Have kids get together at your church (or wherever several phones are available) for a group calling session. Have the committee:

1. call inactive group members and encourage them to attend an upcoming group activity;
2. call group members who are ill (include calling kids' parents who are ill; offer to take them food);
3. invite everyone to a special fun time; or
4. call new members every two weeks.

Ask adults to help with the phone calling. Have them call the same kids each week. Phone calls make kids feel special and they're a good way to develop kid-adult relationships. Have a "telephone social" for your adult callers to thank them for all their hard work.

■ Have a "new member phone blitz." During the two weeks before the new junior highers join your high school group, have several different people call them and invite them to a group activity. (Use the same technique to contact visitors or inactives.)

■ Make conference calls. Arrange ahead of time with a youth group speaker, an admired Christian sports figure, or a former group leader or member to call at a specific time so your youth group members can all talk to him or her.

■ Do telephone interviews. Tape record interviews with past youth group members, missionaries, experts. Play the tapes for your youth group and/or your congregation.

■ Arrange a mystery conference-call interview. Have youth group members guess who's on the line.

■ Have birthday callers. Have three different people call each group member who has a birthday during the month. Tape record a peppy song, verse or message to play during the call.



LISTINGS/HOTLINES

■ Make a "Yellow Pages" directory. List all youth group members along with two of their special talents. (This is great for boosting self-images.) Also include adult professionals kids could call for help (pastors, counselors, doctors).

■ Make a listing of phone numbers people can call for information and advice, such as the church office, your number and the pastor's number.

■ Start a "dial-a-gram" program. Provide latchkey kids with the names and phone numbers of retired or elderly people in your church who have time to talk with kids after school.

■ Have a homework hotline. List teachers, adults with special skills and students who will help kids with their homework questions.

■ Make a "dial-a-devotion" recording. Tape 30-second devotionals and put them on an answering machine.

■ Have a suicide hotline. Arrange with a counselor or pastor to make a number available for anyone who needs to talk about suicide.

■ Make a pocket-size phone and address book for all the hotline numbers. Give one to each youth group member.



FUN ACTIVITIES

■ Have a telephone treasure hunt. Make a list of information for group members to find using the telephone. For example, call and get the price of Pizzeria's pizza, or what hours a certain restaurant serves breakfast.

■ Make a volunteer needs list. List where young people can volunteer to help, such as hospitals and social services centers.

■ Use a special songbook made for push-button phones. By calling someone and pushing the "right" buttons you can wish "Happy Birthday" to youth group members. (For example, **The Pushbutton Telephone Songbook** by Michael Scheff.)

■ Play "Dear Abby." Divide group members into two teams with one phone for each team. Present problems to one group and have the second group brainstorm solutions. Have the second group call the first group with their answers.

■ Have dating etiquette training. Help kids learn how to call to ask for a date or to say thank you.

■ Tape record a "get-well" card for the calling committee to play for kids who are sick.



OTHER IDEAS

■ Keep a record of your volunteer time and unreimbursed business-related calls. They're tax deductible.

■ Discuss with your group what it might be like not having a phone. Talk about the pros and cons of having the telephone at your fingertips. (For additional discussion ideas, see the MediaWatch section of the June-August 1985 issue of GROUP Magazine.) 